

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

ROM. 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel:

7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

9 For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

10 And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac;

11 (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

14 What shall we say then? *Is*

there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

16 So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

NOTES

Elected by God

Lesson Text: Romans 9:6-21

Related Scriptures: Ephesians 2:2-10;
Romans 4:13-17; Isaiah 45:8-12

TIME: A.D. 56

PLACE: from Corinth

GOLDEN TEXT—"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Romans 9:18).

Lesson Exposition

GOD'S PEOPLE—Rom. 9:6-13

Progeny (Rom. 9:6-7). Chapters 9 through 11 are often seen as the most difficult section of Paul's epistle to the Romans. But it need not trouble us if we just take time to follow his argument. Paul is actually picking up on an earlier theme, seen in the question, "What advantage then hath the Jew?" (3:1). His answer then: "Much every way" (vs. 2), especially given that they had been entrusted with God's Word through the prophets.

The reason some did not believe in Christ was that not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Simply put, not everyone who is a physical descendant of Abraham is an heir to his promises through faith, as Paul alluded to earlier (2:28-29).

Abraham had several children, among them Ishmael and the sons of Keturah (Gen. 16:16; 25:1-4), who were not counted in the promise. That promise was only to Abraham's son Isaac, through whom the blessings would flow.

Promise (Rom. 9:8-9). Reiterating what he has just said, Paul points out that the "children of the flesh" (physi-

cal descendants of Abraham) are not necessarily the "children of God."

Purpose (Rom. 9:10-11). As an additional illustration of this principle, Paul mentions Isaac and Rebekah (spelled Rebecca in Romans). Like Sarah, Rebekah was barren for a time (Gen. 25:21).

Before the children were born, God decided their future roles. It was not a case of anything they had done, because they had not done anything.

Privilege (Rom. 9:12-13). The fact that the elder would serve the younger was not the way things normally worked. God nevertheless decreed that the younger son, Jacob, would have precedence over the elder, Esau.

GOD'S MERCY—Rom. 9:14-18

God's justice (Rom. 9:14). Anticipating what his readers might think from what he has just written, Paul raises the question regarding the righteousness and justice of God. In short, if God decided ahead of time whom He was going to bless or use, did that not indicate that He was being unfair? Or as Paul puts it, "Is there

unrighteousness with God?"

Because of our own sense of fairness, we may even look at divine decisions and find that some of them seem harsh or even unjust. But should we embrace such a conclusion? Paul exclaims, "God forbid," literally, "May it never be."

God's mercy (Rom. 9:15-16). Using the example of God's dealings with Pharaoh and the Egyptians, Paul emphasizes that God can do as He pleases, a concept that will help us deal with things we do not understand.

God's power (Rom. 9:17-18). Quoting Exodus 9:16, Paul declares that God's purposes are not capricious. Just as Pharaoh and the Egyptians showed their power over the Hebrews for some four hundred years (Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6), the Lord exercised His power over Pharaoh and his people. The ten plagues that came upon Egypt revealed that the God of the Hebrews was superior to any of the so-called gods of Egypt. Clearly, Yahweh's power was affirmed through what happened to Pharaoh and Egypt.

GOD'S WILL—Rom. 9:19-21

Human complaint (Rom. 9:19). Paul realized that some of the things he wrote went against conventional wisdom, so he anticipated what question might be asked next. In this case it was, "Why doth he yet find fault?"

God's choice (Rom. 9:20-21). As far as Paul was concerned, to even raise some of these questions is to set ourselves against the Lord and His sovereign will. As Paul asks, "Who art thou that repliest against God?"

As we think about the above, it raises serious questions concerning our view of God and how we pray, what we pray for, or even if we pray. Some might conclude that there is no reason to pray, but that would be a wrong conclusion. To begin with, we are commanded to pray, and we know

from both Scripture and experience that prayer changes things. While God knows the future, we do not. God not only ordains the end, but He ordains the means to the end, which includes our participation.

Using an illustration from the Old Testament (Isa. 29:16; 45:9; Jer. 18:6), Paul declares that as the potter could take the same lump of clay and make different objects from it, so it was with God.

Keeping these concepts in mind when we read other passages of Scripture is helpful. We should not, however, ignore other texts that affirm human responsibility and choice.

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. What advantage had God's plan given the Jews?
2. What did Paul mean when he said that not all who are descended from Israel are Israel?
3. How was Abraham's family an illustration of Romans 9:6?
4. In what way were Sarah and Rebekah alike?
5. When did God decide the futures of Jacob and Esau?
6. What question does Paul anticipate about God's justice?
7. What is Paul's conclusion for those who deny God's righteousness?
8. What was revealed in God's dealings with Pharaoh?
9. Why should we pray if God sovereignly decrees everything?
10. What illustration from Isaiah and Jeremiah does Paul use concerning God's sovereignty?

—John Alva Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. We are not granted salvation by birth—it is only by God’s grace (Rom. 9:6-8).
2. God fulfills His promises in His time and in His way (vss. 9-11).
3. God’s sovereign election overrules all human expectations (vs. 12).
4. God’s election is not based on merit. It is by His choice alone (vss. 13-16).
5. God’s election and timing are completely sovereign (vs. 17).
6. God has the right to shape and mold us for His own purposes (vss. 18-21).

—Valante M. Grant.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What are the blessings of God’s election? Discuss.
2. Are those whom God elects inherently more worthy of salvation? Why or why not? Discuss.
3. How can we recognize the calling of God? Discuss.
4. What is the meaning and significance of Paul’s statement that “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6).
5. Can God still save someone who has hardened his heart? How does this affect our witness to such a person?
6. If God sovereignly determines everything, why does He still hold humans responsible for their sins? Discuss.

—Valante M. Grant.

Golden Text Illuminated

“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Romans 9:18).

Many of us have participated in an election. In today’s lesson, we come across a very different type of election. God has elected His people from before time. And, unlike our modern elections, God is the only One who casts a vote.

To some, this may seem unfair. Should we not have some say in God’s plan? Paul’s blunt answer is no. God alone is the Creator, and the Creator alone has the right to make such choices concerning His creation.

This is not to say that there is anything about those God chooses that makes them better than others. You see, God does not choose the way we often do. He does not choose based on popularity, ability, or status.

God often calls very unlikely people to be His servants. Often He uses someone’s weakness to show His strength, for that is how His glory is best demonstrated (cf. II Cor. 12:9).

God even chooses unbelievers to further His eternal plan. This week’s golden text stresses God’s sovereignty in all matters. He is a merciful God, but His mercy is not extended to all to the same degree. Some He even chooses to “harden.” Particularly in view here is the pharaoh of the Exodus, the wicked king who steadfastly rejected the appeals of God given through Moses.

We cannot know all the mind of God, but we can trust that His choices and His ways are always designed to rightly bring glory to Him.

—Jennifer Francis.